

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 6/26/2025 2:07:08 AM

First name: Ronald

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Subject: Public Comment on Ponderosa Project (#64551) - Opposition and Concerns

Dear U.S. Forest Service,

As a resident of the Black Hills region, I am writing to express serious concerns regarding the proposed Ponderosa Project (#64551), which outlines 43 mineral exploration drilling sites on Forest Service land near Spearfish Canyon. I urge the Forest Service to either deny the proposal outright or significantly modify it to protect the region's water, wildlife, and cultural resources.

I am particularly concerned about:

Water Quality Risks: The plan includes 24/7 drilling at depths up to 3,281 feet. This poses a clear threat to Spearfish Creek and its tributaries, which provide vital habitat and clean water to downstream communities.

Environmental Impact: The cumulative damage of 43 drill sites will fragment habitat, introduce constant noise and light pollution, and displace native wildlife. These impacts are incompatible with Forest Service conservation goals.

Cultural Disruption: The project lies just over a mile from tribal ceremonial lands. Industrial activity in such proximity risks infringing on sacred practices and culturally significant spaces.

Community Degradation: Increased truck traffic, round-the-clock operations, and landscape alterations will harm recreation, tourism, and quality of life in this cherished area.

To mitigate these harms, I request that the Forest Service:

1. Limit all drilling and related activity to daylight hours.
2. Establish significant no-drill buffer zones around waterways, cultural sites, and recreational trails.
3. Require rigorous pre-, during-, and post-drilling water quality testing, with results made publicly available.
4. Mandate formal and ongoing consultation with affected tribal communities throughout the review and implementation process.
5. Conduct a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), as required under NEPA, to account for cumulative and long-term effects.

The proposed project threatens irreplaceable natural and cultural resources in one of the most scenic and

ecologically sensitive regions of the Black Hills. For these reasons, I strongly urge the Forest Service to reconsider or revise this proposal in favor of long-term sustainability and public interest.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Ronald Sribniak